

# Catholic Sendai Diocese Newsletter

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## Chrism Mass: Building Solidarity Among Christians in Sendai Diocese

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, Holy Wednesday, the Chrism Mass took place in the Cathedral. There were 28 priests who concelebrated the mass.

During the mass, Kentaro Takagi declared his desire to go through seminary formation as a seminarian of Sendai Diocese. Bishop Martin Tetsuo Hiraga, in front of the assembly, officially accepted Mr. Takagi.



In the same manner, all the priests of Sendai Diocese renewed their vow of obedience to serve God and the Bishop of Sendai Diocese.

Subsequently, Bishop Hiraga blessed three kinds of Holy Oils: Oil use for to anoint the sick, Oil use for baptism, and Chrism Oil.



There were about 200 parishioners from Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima who participated in the Chrism Mass. Indeed, it was a grace-filled occasion.

## Fr. Nicolas Kondi's Farewell Message as a Youth Minister of Sendai Diocese

皆さん、どうもありがとうございます！ Thank you very much! Maraming Salamat, Po! Terima Kasih

banyak! Cảm ơn nhiều! Muchas Gracias! Muito Obrigado! Merci beaucoup!



At the core of my prayer life is the sense of gratitude. If I think of the past six years I have been in the Sendai Diocese, particularly three years as a youth minister, I couldn't help but be grateful of the tremendous blessings I have received all throughout these years. Just imagine the emotional roller coaster I have gone through these past weeks: fear, apprehension, excitement, exhaustion, and the overwhelming love and affirmation. Plus, I have gained 10 more kilos because of the many dinner invitations. However, in the midst of all these feelings, what remains constant is the awareness of deep gratitude.

I am overwhelmed with joy and gratitude as, I recall three years as a youth minister and three years in Morioka. Ministering with the youth together with the joyful lay missionaries, sisters, the priests and staff of the parish has been a great source of joy, fulfillment and laughter.

The youth of the diocese has filled me with great hope and encouragement as I see them respond in faith and generosity in various ways, especially, the openness and joyful energy of the "I Sing for Joy" choir community.

Right now, I am definitely struggling to leave. In spite of this, I am very thankful for the relationships I have built in this church/diocese and how you have helped me grow in my relationship with God.

My heart is filled with joy and gratitude. I believe that it is gratitude that makes us joyful. To end this message, I would like to quote St. Paul's letter to the Philippians 1:3-6; 9-11,

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,*

*being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.(1:3-6)*

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”(1:9-11)*

## **Fr. Jean-Charles Loiselle: For all that has been, thank you!**

Fr. Loiselle has been a missionary in Japan for about 60 years. He has been involved with the Boy Scouts of Japan for almost 50 years. He has spent 14 years in the Sendai Diocese. He will be turning 85 this year. We don't have enough space to write all his contributions to the Church of Japan. But, in this short interview you will see a glimpse of his greatness as a missionary.



### **Vocation Story**

My vocation story wasn't special like that of St. Paul. I thought there was no other way for me but to be a priest missionary. I just felt it was a call from God. But, if I may recall, I had a

choice whether to be a musician or a priest. I love music very much and at the same time becoming a priest is the only way of life for me. And there was this Quebec missionary from Honduras who inspired me to become one of them. He dedicated his life to the people of Honduras, especially the marginalized sectors. He was happy in his missionary life. I thought I wanted to be happy like him. So, I entered the theological seminary.

### **Future Plan**

I am going to be 85 years old in November. I am not the type of person with a grand plan for the future. I always live each day as it comes. I leave it all to God. But, one thing for sure, I am going back to Quebec. I will continue gardening and playing and listening to music. Music and gardening has kept me alive and kicking all these years in my missionary life. It will continue to be so in the future.

### **Hope for the Church/Diocese of Sendai**

I hope for lay empowerment in the church. The lay people have to be given more active participation, roles and responsibilities in the church, not just following orders from the clergy. There are many lay people who are more capable and are willing to share their gifts if

they are given the chance. I believe that the church is for the lay and not only for the clergy. The clergy's role in the church is like Barnabas who equips leaders to preach God's Word with God's Heart and to empower the people to train others in the scriptures as well. To materialize this hope, the priest has to live with the faithful. He has to immerse himself in the reality of the parishioners. He has to relate with them to understand their situation and be with them. The lay people have to start changing their mentality, putting in mind that the church is one big family/community where each one takes his/her own role and responsibility in building the kingdom of God. There has to be a collaboration between the priest and the parishioners. I know this is difficult and I know it will take some time. But, I hope and pray that it will happen someday.

## **Getting to Know Our New Priest Fr. Felix Lobo, S.V.D.**

### **Source of Vocation**

The source of my vocation as a priest is my family. I am happy to be born and raised in a religious family who nourished me in the love of the Lord. We pray everyday. My grandparents always encouraged me to be good and do good to others. I have four uncles, two aunts and seven cousins who joined the religious life in different congregations. As a young man, I was captivated by the way my parish priest celebrated mass. It was my family, relatives and my parish priest, who inspired me to embrace this way of life. I was in my higher secondary studies when I first met a Society of the Divine Word (S.V.D.) priest, Fr. Bernard Rodrigues, who was the vocation promoter at the time. When I met him, I was attracted to join the S.V.D. congregation with the desire to serve as a priest. Since then, God has always been beside me even in the worst crises of my life. Now, here I am a Divine Word priest in God's vineyard. Still, I am full of gratitude for God's immense love for me.



### **Contribution to the Diocese**

Our superior in the congregation has given me the mandate (obedience) to serve the people of Sendai Diocese. My utmost duty as a Divine Word missionary is to preach the good news to the people. I will use my God-given gifts to reach out to the people with the desire to lead these people towards God. I will serve God joyfully as long as I am in the diocese.

### **Aspiration for the Parishioners**

I hope and pray that the people will be closer to God and become His true disciples. If we spend more time with God and experience His true love, then we can make our church a real house of prayer. Through this, we will be connected

to Him and to others in our society. And this will make our world a better place to live in.

### In Deep Gratitude

I am pleased that I am loved and chosen to be a Divine Word (S.V.D.) priest. I would like to request you to support my vocation and mission through your prayers. It would be a blessing for my priestly life. Once again, I am grateful to God who gave me life and love unconditionally. May God bless all of us.

## News from the Pastoral District

### District #8: Koriyama



An “Alleluia Concert” was held in Koriyama Church on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Proceeds from this benefit concert will go to poor children.

The Xaverio Elementary Choir, Filipino Choir, Vietnamese Choir, Koriyama Church Choir, a cellist and a soprano participated in the concert.

The concert ended with the song, “Amen, Alleluia” which was sung by everyone.

### District #7: Nodamachi Church

On May 19<sup>th</sup> in Nodamachi Church, seven children received their First Holy Communion. It was a joint celebration of Nodamachi Church and Matsukicho Church (five children from Nodamachi and two children from Matsukicho).

Before receiving communion, the children gathered around the altar with Fr. Aime, holding hands singing the “Our Father”.



This event was made possible, thanks to the assistance of Sr. Yasuda, CND, with the collaboration of the parents in preparing the children for their first communion.

After the mass, pictures were taken of the seven children showing their joy.

### District #5: Furukawa, Ishinomaki, Kita Sendai, Higashi Sendai, Nishi Sendai and Shiogama

The 5<sup>th</sup> district started to circulate a newsletter to disseminate information within the district and outside, and to learn from each other; in order to expand the network of mission through written communication.



The recent news shared by the Vietnamese and Filipino young workers was wonderful. It brought joy and hope to the Christian community of Ishinomaki, opening a new path of evangelization.

There might be some language barriers between people. But our unity in faith and love is becoming stronger.

### District # 1: West Aomori

Fr. Rafael at the Kuroishi Church blessed a new organ after the mass. This new organ replaces the 30-year-old organ. It is a symbol of unity among the parishioners because the parishioners themselves raised the funds.



## Sendai Diocesan Activities

### The “Wall of Differences” collapsed due to the earthquake, but new exchanges were born during the March 11 tragedy

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, a Memorial mass to commemorate the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami was presided by Bishop Hiraga at the Sendai Cathedral. There were eight priests who concelebrated the mass and about 160 participants.



In his homily, Fr. Hiroshi Kanda, a priest from Osaka Archdiocese shared his experience during the Kobe earthquake in 1995. He said that the disaster broke down the walls that divided people due to race, culture and religious differences. Since, everybody needed help, they became closer to one another. However, when the reconstruction and restoration was completed people have the tendency to erect new walls.

According to Fr. Kanda, there are many disasters which happen in Japan, like in Kumamoto, Hiroshima, etc. Every time there are disasters, many volunteers from various cultures and nationalities gather together with the survivors and help one another. As a consequence, multiculturalism emerged through these cultural exchanges. This is a new phenomenon happening not just in Japanese society but also within our church. Multiculturalism is the beginning of a new creation. Fr. Kanda felt that this cultural exchange will begin a new creation and the church will be a new church.

### Inochi no Hikari 3.15 Fukushima A Day of Prayer for the Victims of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant Meltdown

To remember and pray for the victims of the tragedy that happened eight years ago on March 15<sup>th</sup> in Fukushima, Bishop Hiraga, Bishop Koda, Bishop Yamanouchi and seven priests concelebrated a Holy Mass in Haranomachi Church.



In the homily, Fr. Ichiro Mitsunobu said that the effect of the nuclear accident in Fukushima has brought about division in nature, division among people, and division within families. This nuclear disaster is similar to Chernobyl in 1986. It takes decades to return to normal life.

A Buddhist Priest, Tokun Tanaka, shared his experience being in charge of a temple located within 20 kilometers of the nuclear power plant. Living in Iwaki, he has to travel thousands of kilometers to visit the members of his temple.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> at Mototerakoji Church, Dr. Keiko Kitagawa, a pediatrician and a psychiatrist from Sapporo, explained the effects of the nuclear accident on children, such as thyroid cancer. In the same way, it greatly affects the children psychologically because the families are torn apart due to economic burden. A question remains: how will Japan insure the safety of the nuclear power plants in the future.

### Sendai Diocese Public Relations Committee and District Public Relations Committee General Assembly

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, the Sendai Diocese Public Relations Committee together with Public Relation officers from each district held a general assembly.

In this gathering, the past year's publications (including the first issue of the English version of the newsletter) have been evaluated. Some people suggested reaching out and communicating to a wider network through social media. From this time, those who want to contribute an article to be published either in Japanese or English are sincerely welcome.

### Foreign Language Mass Schedule

- *English mass in Mototerakoji Church, Sendai, is every third Sunday of the month at 2:00 p.m. If there are any changes, please check this website <http://st.cat-v.ne.jp/catholic-sendai/oshirase.html>*
- *Since there is no regular schedule for other foreign language masses in Mototerakoji Church like Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, and Indonesian Mass, please check this website <http://st.cat-v.ne.jp/catholic-sendai/oshirase.html>*
- *English mass in Shike Church, Morioka, is every last Sunday of the month at 11:00 a.m.*
- *Tagalog mass in Ichinoseki Church is every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month at 2:00 p.m.*
- *Tagalog mass in Iwaki, Taira Church, is every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month at 3:00 p.m.*